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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 002053

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA, WHA/CAR NORMAN. DRL, G/TIP

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SMIG](#) [PHUM](#) [HA](#) [DR](#)

SUBJECT: DOMINICAN CHURCH VIA MFA REJECTS ALLEGATIONS OF  
MIGRANT MISTREATMENT

11. (SBU) In a letter sent by the Dominican MFA to all ambassadors resident, but personally delivered to Embassy's Charge d'Affaires, a.i. on August 30, as well as ambassadors from Canada, France, and the United Kingdom, Bishop Francisco Ozoria Acosta of the Diocese of San Pedro de Macoris revisits the December 2006 removal of Haitian-rights activist Fr. Christopher Hartley from his parish of San Jose de Los Llanos. By declaring Hartley to have been removed for "serious errors committed in detriment to his pastoral work," the Church implicitly discredits Hartley's allegations of serious mistreatment of undocumented Haitian workers on Dominican sugar cane plantations (bateys). The Church also directly refutes media claims that Hartley's departure was a result of pressure from Dominican "big sugar." Embassy views the timing of this latest letter and the method of delivery as part of a larger Dominican effort to secure support for a UN Security Council seat.

12. (U) A copy of the original letter will be forwarded to WHA/CAR. Embassy translation follows. Begin text:

Monsignor Francisco Ozoria Acosta  
Bishop of San Pedro de Macoris  
No. 23/07  
10 August 2007

Distinguished Ambassador:

Recently I wrote the congregation of the Diocese of San Pedro de Macoris (on December 21, 2006) regarding the decision we took to conclude the parochial work of Father Christopher Hartley Sartorius as we could no longer accept (incardinar) him in our diocese on grounds that are exclusively inherent to our priestly ministry.

Notwithstanding this decision, the press, national as much as international, has published inexact and false versions of the reasons that moved us to take this decision.

This communication may serve to clarify for you and for the authorities which you represent, that Father Hartley ended his work in the Parish of San Jose de Los Llanos because of serious errors committed in detriment to his pastoral work that were committed during his residence in this diocese. I must also say that much good was done by Father Hartley in the Parish of Los Llanos while in the diocese.

Consequently, I wish to clarify that whichever version that affirms, insinuates, or suggests that our decision was in service of or in response to pressures imposed by sugar producers that operate in our diocese is false.

I would like to take this occasion to add that, with the departure of Father Christopher, we have not abandoned evangelical work in the Parish of Los Llanos, whose responsibility is now that of the Paulist Fathers. They, with tremendous charity and Christian self-denial, serve in a disinterested manner all of the population of that parish. I add that there have always been and that there still are other priests and pastoral agents working directly, but discretely, in favor of the defense of the rights of the poor be they Haitians or Dominicans.

I trust that this clarification will be sufficient to correct any misinterpretation on the part of your government and the international public regarding this incident. We hope that one piece of misinformation neither drags down the image of the Dominican Republic, a county with such interest in giving aid and assistance to the Haitian population in the county; nor the Church, which has always taken seriously its pastoral work.

I thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

I extend my blessings.

End text.

13. (U) Embassy translated excerpts from the Pastoral letter of December 21, 2006, follow, as much as they directly touch on the issue. Full Spanish-language text of this letter will be forwarded to WHA/CAR. Begin text.

In other news, I want to give some information that will be useful for the entire diocese: Fathers Christopher (Hartley) and Antonio have left the diocese.

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Father Antonio was already here when this diocese was established and remained for 11 years, working with love and a missionary spirit. We can see the spiritual, human, and material transformation that he brought about as head of the Parish of San Antonio de Padua de El Puerto. We remember with gratitude all of Father Antonio's support of the diocese and the parish.

When we began to elaborate our Pastoral Plan, Father Antonio was not in complete agreement with what was decided. He expressed this disagreement on various occasions, including on a spiritual retreat with Father Christopher and in a letter directed to me questioning the plan in relation to Church doctrine.

As I didn't respond to the this letter in order to not polarize the situation, in a second letter I was again invited to reply. Allow me to quote a paragraph:

Perhaps the reason that you have not given me a response to my letter is that I am not in your complete confidence. If this is the case, this would be a personal, priestly, and ecclesiastical situation for me . . . Without your express confidence, I don't believe I could continue in this diocese further. . . .

(The Bishop now details the dismissal of Antonio through non-renewal of his contract.)

In this situation now enters Father Christopher wishing to defend his great friend Antonio. Father Christopher came to this Diocese motivated and recommended by Father Antonio.

Received by and serving the Archdiocese of New York, he came here to give assistance as a missionary for one year. After that year passed, he was renewed for a second year and later, as all was progressing well, for another four years. At the completion of those four years, and without previously

consulting me, he asked the Archbishop of New York to remove him from that Archdiocese. I happened to speak to the Cardinal Archbishop of New York, he asked me if I was disposed to accept Father Hartley for service in the Diocese of San Pedro de Macoris. I responded to Cardinal Egan that, as I had never heard of this issue before, I would be open to the possibility of beginning the process of formal acceptance, which takes three years. In January 2006 (one year and seven months later) I responded to the Father and sent a copy to the Cardinal, that I could not welcome him into the Diocese of San Pedro de Macoris. With this communication the process was terminated. The Father remained past this time, I expected the Cardinal or the Father to take the decision (to order departure or depart), but it did not end up this way.

Though I remained with this hope, Father Christopher intervened in a disloyal and anti-ecclesiastical manner, through the commission of very serious acts. All of this I can prove. Luckily, a recorder came into my possession that contains proof of the crime (delito). (Father Hartley had said that he had lost this recorder.)

Father Hartley did not leave this Diocese for the good he had done. We asked Father Hartley to leave this diocese for grave crimes which we will not discuss. . . .

End text.  
BULLEN